

Doesn't any of this strike anyone as odd?

THE U.S. ARMY SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to express my continued support for the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), located at Fort Benning, Georgia. Legislation has been introduced by my colleagues both in the House and the Senate which would close the School of the Americas, and last evening the House adopted an amendment to do so. Mr. President, I rise to support the School of the Americas and the vital mission it performs in encouraging diplomacy and democracy within the militaries located in the Americas.

The School of the Americas has been a key instrument of U.S. foreign policy in Latin and Southern America for over fifty years and is the single most important instrument of our National Security Strategy of engagement in the Southern Hemisphere.

The legislation opposing the School has been accompanied by a mountain of communications alleging that this School, operated by the U.S. Army and funded by taxpayers' dollars, is the cause of horrendous human rights abuses in Central and South America. In twelve separate investigations since 1989, the Department of Defense, the Army, the GAO and others have found nothing to suggest that the School either taught or inspired Latin Americans to commit such crimes. Yet, sponsors of these measures reproduce the critics' list of atrocities allegedly committed by a small number of graduates in order to transfer responsibility for these crimes to the backs of the School and the Army rather than to the individuals themselves.

The School is, and always has been, a U.S. Army training and education institution teaching the same tactics, techniques, and procedures taught at other U.S. Army schools and imparting the very same values that the Army teaches its own soldiers. These U.S. military personnel receive the same training as all graduates of our military schools. To suggest that terrorist activities are taught to students would suggest that we in fact teach terrorist activities to all of our own military personnel. This is assuredly not the case.

The School is commanded by a U.S. Army colonel whose chain of command includes the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Infantry Center and the Commanding General of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. The School also receives oversight and direction from the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Southern Command. The School's staff and faculty includes over 170 U.S. Army officers, noncommissioned officers, enlisted soldiers, and Department of the Army civilians. The

School counts among its graduates over 1,500 U.S. military personnel including five general officers currently serving on active duty in our military.

I agree completely with critics of the School that "Human rights is not a partisan issue," and I further agree that, in the past there were indeed some shortcomings in the School's fulfillment of its mission to transmit all of the values we hold dear in our country. In that regard, today, the U.S. Army School of the Americas has the U.S. Army's premier human rights training program. The program has been expanded in recent years in consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross and Mr. Steve Schneebaum, a noted human rights attorney and a member of the School's Board of Visitors. Every student and instructor at the School receives mandatory human rights instruction and the International Committee of the Red Cross teaches human rights each year during the School's Command and General Staff and Peace Operations courses. Last year, over 900 Latin American soldiers, civilians, and police received human rights instruction at the U.S. Army School of the Americas.

Latin America is currently undergoing an unparalleled transformation to democratic governance, civilian control of the military, and economic reform along free market principles. Almost every nation in Latin America has a democratically elected government. During this transition, the region's militaries have accepted structural cuts, reduced budgets, and curtailed influence in society. In many cases, their acceptance of this new reality has been encouraged and enhanced by the strategy of engagement of which the U.S. Army School of the Americas is an integral part. However, many Latin American democracies are fragile. True change does not occur in days, months, or even years. We must continue to engage Latin American governments, including their militaries. Marginalizing or ignoring the militaries of the region will not help in consolidating hard-won democracy but, instead, will have the opposite effect. Our efforts to engage the militaries of the region are more important and more relevant than ever. The U.S. Army School of the Americas is unique in this regard because it trains and educates large numbers of Latin American students who cannot be accommodated in other U.S. military service schools due to limited student spaces and the inability of other U.S. military schools to teach in Spanish.

Over the years, changes have been made to enhance the School's focus on human rights and diplomacy. Recently introduced courses such as Democratic Sustainment, Humanitarian Demining, International Peacekeeping Operations, Counternarcotics Operations, and Human Rights Train-the-Trainer,

directly support shared security interests in the region, and are not offered elsewhere. Other proposed changes include placing the School under the jurisdiction of U.S. Southern Command and expanding the Board of Visitors to include congressional membership—both proposals which I strongly support.

By focusing on the negative, critics ignore the many recent positive contributions that U.S. Army School of the Americas graduates have made. In 1995, this nation helped broker a cease fire between Peru and Ecuador when a historical border dispute threatened to ignite into war. The key members of the delegations that put together that accord were U.S. Army School of the Americas graduates, from Peru, from Ecuador, and from the guarantor nations of the United States and Chile. In fact, the Commander of the U.S. contingent to the multinational peacekeeping force, who received special recognition from the State Department for "extraordinary contributions to U.S. diplomacy," was a 1986 graduate of the School's Command and General Staff course, and serves as the current Commandant of the School. More recently, in 1997, the President of Ecuador was removed from office, creating a constitutional crisis. Some of the people of Ecuador called for the military to take power, but their military refused. Many of the officers in the high command were U.S. Army School of the Americas graduates. Finally, less than four months ago, the President of Paraguay was impeached for misconduct. Once again, a constitutional crisis ensued. Once again, the military refused to take power. Once again many of the officers in that military were U.S. Army School of the Americas graduates, including one general officer who played a key role in the refusal.

I ask each of you to take a careful look at the U.S. Army School of the Americas as it exists today. Look to the future. As stated by the School's critics, "The contentious politics of U.S. foreign policy in Central America in the 1980s are over." I strongly urge you to continue your support of the Army School of the Americas and the U.S. Army.

REGULATORY FAIRNESS AND OPENNESS ACT

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I rise today to signify my support for the introduction of the Regulatory Fairness and Openness Act of 1999.

According to data compiled in the last five years, the State of Washington produces more than 230 food, feed and seed crops; ranks in the top five for the value of the commodities produced; leads the nation in the production of apples, spearmint oil, red raspberries, hops, edible peas and lentils, asparagus, sweet cherries, and